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Proposed themes for the commemoration of the African Telecommunications Day (ATD) 7th December 2005

The African Telecommunications Day (ATD) is celebrated annually on the 7th December to mark the founding of the Union. The Administrative Council during its sessions considers and adopts a particular theme to commemorate the Day. The following themes are proposed for the consideration and approval by the Council for 2005 and 2006 respectively.

a)   **New Generation Networks (NGN): Challenges and opportunities for Africa**

NGN represents varied technological developments in the ICT sector. The fundamental difference between NGN and today's network is the switch from current circuit switched networks to packet based systems such as those using Internet Protocol (IP). A rapidly emerging service, the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), is between fixed line and mobile users enabling the provision of seamless communication.

NGN is envisaged, given appropriate application standards, to enable multiple industry players in the provision of services thus enhancing competition as well as reduced service provision costs. Viewed together, these changes will require important developments not only in the transmission and switching infrastructure but also in the promise of better cheaper services including enhanced rural access in Africa.

NGN therefore needs to be embraced by our administrations with all vigor and determination in many areas such as the application of new technological standards and related capacity building as well as policy / regulation and attracting investment in advanced systems.

b)   **Attaining Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A critical challenge to ICT Growth in Africa**

The correlation between development and ICTs is well established and globally accepted. Access to information is critical to any development process. Research on the role of ICTs in socio-economic development has shown that communication can impact greatly on efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the provision and distribution of goods and services to the population.

ICT policy and regulation, a sector which African countries have very strongly embraced, has and is expected to continue playing a significant role in shaping the ICT market and its growth potential both in terms of investment levels and service access. This trend augurs well for the continent's economic and social development.

In September 2000, the Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration to achieve eight specified targets central to human development by the 2015. They undertook to focus and engage closely with stakeholders in enhancing national programmes towards meeting the following MDGs: -

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote Gender Equality
- Reduce Child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV Aids, Malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development